

Public Abstract

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Title:A Case Study of the Cognitive Apprenticeship Model in Leadership Education

The cognitive apprenticeship model (CAM) has been examined for more than a quarter century as an instructional model from the perspectives of instructors. However, CAM is also a learning model. Remarkably little has been offered regarding the manner by which learners experience this model, and yet such perspectives are relevant to the successful design of CAM for instruction and learning. Accordingly, this research sought to describe learner perspectives, motivations, and coping strategies through the lived experiences of students as they used CAM within an education program to develop leadership competencies.

Collins, Brown, and Newman's (1987) seminal work in CAM followed the theoretical traditions of Piaget, Bandura, and Vygotsky in cognitive and social learning models. Collins et al., elaborated beyond the physical task mastery of traditional apprenticeships to discover tacit knowledge within cognitive apprenticeships by asking, "How do masters think?" That past work begs new questions: How do learners describe their experiences using CAM in education? And are learner and instructor perspectives of mastery congruent?

This research developed a case study using a grounded theory technique. Four students nearing the end of a three-year leadership program participated over the duration of a weeklong leadership session. Findings discovered that (1) learners preferred to explore through non-evaluated play; (2) failure elicited greater effort only if the learner initially expected to succeed; (3) humor was a preferred learner coping strategy; and (4) the learner's emotional state influenced adherence to the cognitive model. These findings suggest four key assumptions of learner participation in CAM require further study and refinement.